



## NEWS RELEASE

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### **Bike Safety Month Observed in May**

BISMARCK, N.D. – May is National Bike Safety Month. In order to highlight the importance of bicycle safety, the North Dakota Department of Health is encouraging bike riders to take precautions to reduce their chances of injury while biking, according to Dawn Mayer, health educator with the Department of Health.

Statistics compiled by the Johns Hopkins Injury Prevention Center indicate that more than 900 bicyclists are killed, 20,000 are admitted to hospitals, and 589,000 receive emergency room treatment each year in the United States. According to the North Dakota Department of Transportation, two North Dakotans died and 80 were injured in 2004 as a result of collisions that involved bicycles and motor vehicles.

“With spring here, more and more bikes are coming out of winter storage,” Mayer said. “As a result, bikes may need a tune up. Ensure your bike is in good condition before riding it, and always follow safe riding practices.”

The Department of Health encourages North Dakotans to follow these safety tips for reducing injuries related to bicycle riding:

- **Protect your head:** Always wear a helmet that complies with the Consumer Product Safety Commission’s standard. Bicyclists should select a helmet that fits snugly and sits flat on the head. For children, use the extra padding that comes with the helmet to ensure a proper fit. This padding can be removed as the child’s head grows.
- **Ensure bike readiness:** Make sure your bike is adjusted properly. Before riding your bike, check to make sure all parts are secure and working well. The handlebars should be firmly in place and turn easily. Wheels must be straight and secure.

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- **Check your brakes:** Keep your breaks adjusted at all times. If you cannot stop quickly, consult your owner's manual or have a bike shop adjust the breaks. When your hand brake levers are fully applied, they should not touch the handlebars. Each brake shoe pad should wear evenly and never be separated more than one-eighth inch from the rim.
- **Make yourself visible:** When riding a bike, wear clothes that make you more visible to drivers, such as neon, florescent or other bright colors.
- **Avoid biking at night:** It is far more dangerous to bike at night than during the day. Most bikes are equipped for daylight use and need to be adapted for nighttime use.
- **Stay alert:** Always keep a lookout for obstacles in your path. Watch out for potholes, cracks, expansion joints, railroad tracks, wet leaves, drainage grates or anything that could make you fall. Be especially careful in wet weather and when there could be ice or frost on your path.
- **Always ride in the right direction:** Ride on the right side in a straight and predictable path. Always go single file in the same direction as other vehicles. Riding against traffic puts you where motorists don't expect to see you; as a result they may pull across your path or turn into you.
- **Check for traffic:** Always be aware of the traffic around you. More than 70 percent of car-bike crashes occur at driveways or other intersections. Before you enter any street or intersection, check for traffic. Always look left-right-left, and walk your bike into the street to begin your ride.
- **Obey the rules of the road:** Learn all traffic laws. Bikes are considered vehicles and must obey the same rules. Read your state driver's handbook and follow all traffic signs, laws and rules for operating a vehicle on the road. Always signal your moves and be courteous to pedestrians and other vehicle operators.

For more information about bike safety, contact Dawn Mayer, North Dakota Department of Health, at 701.328.4533 or 800.472.2286 (press 1).

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